Indian and Northern Affairs Canada / Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada

Canada

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
www.ainc-inac.gc.ca

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT MINISTERS' FORUM HIGHLIGHTS SUCCESSES

2-3083

YELLOWKNIFE, Northwest Territories –Federal, provincial and territorial development Ministers representing Canada's northern jurisdictions met this week in Yellowknife for their annual two-day meeting. This is the first time the Northern Development Ministers Forum (NDMF) has been held in the Northwest Territories (NWT).

The Forum's purpose is to advance the diverse and common interests of Northern Canadians while raising awareness, among decision-makers and the public, of the accomplishments, contributions and potential of the North.

The theme of this year's Forum hosted by the Government of the Northwest Territories Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, Robert R. McLeod, was: *Developing the Tourism Potential of Canada's North*.

"Prime Minister Stephen Harper and our Government are putting Canada's North higher on the domestic policy agenda than any other government has for half a century," said the Honourable Chuck Strahl. "The North has a lot to offer Canadians and people around the world. We are working on many initiatives that will help the North realize its full potential, which include creating opportunities for economic development, protecting the North's environment, and asserting Canada's sovereignty in the High North."

"This Forum is a positive collective effort among governments to help support a stronger northern economy through tourism growth," noted the Honourable Diane Ablonczy, Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism). "Tourism plays a vital part in the economic development of the North while respecting and protecting our unique northern environment."

The Forum's theme was supported by the tabling of a Report on Northern Tourism in Canada, which detailed the challenges and identified the opportunities and best practices of northern tourism in all jurisdictions. The Report will be provided for consideration by respective tourism Ministers and the Canadian Tourism Commission.

Guest speakers at the Forum provided varying perspectives on the global, national and local tourism sectors and discussions centred on raising the awareness of opportunities and common challenges faced by northern tourism operators.

Ministers at this year's meeting affirmed the role of their Forum - agreeing that its mandate to provide a focus on northern issues continues to be a required and important element of raising awareness among Canada's decision makers to the unique needs of Canada's northern regions.

Ministers also received updates on priority projects that have been advanced in the past year including "Initiatives to Maximize Economic and Social Impacts from Major Projects in the North", "Knowledge North" and the Focus North Website, which can be accessed at www.focusnorth.ca *(external link, opens a new window)* . In response to a directive at the 2007 Forum in Ottawa, Ministers also tabled a Priority Project Report on Climate Change. "This year has highlighted global climate and energy concerns," Minister McLeod noted. "Canada's northern regions are on the front line of these struggles: witnessing and experiencing, directly, the effects of global warming and dealing with the impacts of both climate change and rising energy costs."

Ministers approved the theme of "Changing Northern Economies" for the 2009 Forum, which will be hosted by the Government of British Columbia.

"Each of our provinces and territories recognized the importance of building strong rural and northern communities and British Columbia looks forward to welcoming our colleagues from across the country in Dawson Creek B.C. in 2009 to build on the discussions we've had over the past two days, "said Dennis MacKay, British Columbia MLA for Bulkley Valley – Stikine, attending the Forum on behalf of the Honourable Blair Lekstrom, Minister of Community Development.

Observations by Ministers in Attendance

Ontario

"Ontario's Far North has the potential to become a major player in the growing tourism sector," said the Honourable Michael Gravelle, Ontario's Minister of Northern Development and Mines. "Participating in these important deliberations allows us to share views and policies on how to strengthen the Far North's tourism potential in an environmentally sustainable way."

Québec

"Québec's participation in the Northern Development Ministers' Forum is in line with our government's objective to further develop the natural resources and tourism activity in Northern Québec. This will increase prosperity and will enhance the quality of life of Northern residents while supporting sustainable development," said Geoffrey Kelley, Québec MNA for Jacques-Cartier, speaking on behalf of the Québec Minister of Municipal Affairs and Regions. "In that context, I am pleased that we have contributed to the development of a framework that will make it possible to better monitor the social and economic impacts of major projects in the North, including as it relates to northern residents living conditions."

Manitoba

"As home to Canada's only arctic seaport at Churchill, Northern Development including northern tourism is growing in importance in our province. Northern Manitoba has a skills shortage which provides an historic opportunity to address the high unemployment facing many northern communities," noted Oscar Lathlin, Manitoba Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

Yukon

"Working together, we have achieved progress on issues of shared interest, such as tourism in the North and climate change," Yukon Economic Development Minister and Minister responsible for the Yukon Energy Corp. Jim Kenyon said. "It is this united approach that allows us to move forward on matters of critical importance to northern development."

Saskatchewan

"Saskatchewan's economy is on a roll, both north and south, and we are working to ensure that all Saskatchewan people benefit from our economic momentum in a sustainable way," said the Honourable June Draude, Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs. "Reflecting the theme of this year's Forum, the growth potential for tourism as well as for northern resource development has all Saskatchewan people seeing a bright future and, from what we have discussed these past two days, for all of northern Canada."

Newfoundland and Labrador

"It is clear that the tourism market in northern Canada has enormous potential. This forum is an excellent opportunity to explore possibilities that will benefit all northern jurisdictions," said the Honourable John Hickey, Minister of Labrador Affairs, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. "As we continue to move forward with our tourism developments, we will need to be cognizant of global climate conditions and how they specifically

affect the North."

Nunavut

Patterk Netser, Nunavut's Minister of Economic Development & Transportation, said, "The theme for this year's forum is very relevant to Nunavut. Tourism is a key emerging sector in Nunavut with many opportunities for our people. Investment to support the development of tourism products and capacity is critically needed."

Minister Netser added, "It is also important we consider the impacts of tourism on the northern environment. We want to maintain the pristine qualities of our land and our traditional values while working towards local economic benefit."

This release is also available on the internet at www.focusnorth.ca *(external link, opens a new window)* .

For further information please contact:

Media Relations
GNWT
Brad Poulter
Cabinet Communications
Office of the Premier
867-669-2302

Date Modified: 2008-08-29